

Movie Makers

May-June, 2000

Volume 10 No. 3

The American Motion Picture Society

Travelogues & Nature Documentaries

Buff Corsi

Editor's note: The following article is an outline from a well received speech that Buff Corsi gave at last year's Casablanca conference. It is offered here as a possible tool for members to use for reference when traveling. It covers a lot of useful ideas.

"There sure is a lot to learn in this video game. Most of all discipline and self restraint." Wolfgang Gunther.

1. How to pack your camera equipment

- A. Backpack-style carrying bag
 - i. Frees up hands for other gear
 - ii. Safer transport when in "adventure travel" situations
- B. Case w/movable interior spaces to adapt to changes in equipment
- C. Consider current, more restrictive airline carry-on rules

2. Traveling with the Casa-

blanca

- A. Pelican case
- B. Seal skin
- C. Surge protector

3. Tripod: the most important video accessory - don't leave home without it

- A. Sturdy enough for conditions/ small enough to pack
- B. Removable fluid head



- C. Ball leveler
- D. Quick release mount

4. Other ways of steadyng camera

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A Generous Gift

Long time AMPS member Rose Dabbs is contributing many of her award winning 8mm and 16mm films to AMPS.

This is quite an honor to bestow upon our society. Rose and her husband made movies for many years. The society hopes to transfer



many of these films to videotape for interested members to see.

Rose continues to be a generous benefactor to AMPS and has always encouraged filmmaking. Thank you Rose!

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From the Editor

Movie Makers

Dedicated to the interests of the Serious Motion Picture Maker.

Vol. 10 May-June 2000
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MOVIE MAKERS is published bi-monthly on the 25th day of even-numbered months by the AMERICAN MOTION PICTURE SOCIETY and features news and articles of interest to the serious motion picture maker, video or film.

Membership price per year is \$7.00, Canada \$9.00, foreign addresses \$10.00, all payable in U.S. funds or equivalent. Articles may be copied when the source is given. Back copies are available at .80 cents post paid.

George W. Cushman
Founder,
1909- 1996

Matt Jenkins, Editor

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Address correspondence to the Society, 30 Kanan Rd. Oak Park, CA 91377-1105. E-mail: RGARRETSON1@JUNO.COM.

Officers of the Society: President, Ernest Smith, Salt Lake, Utah; vice President, open; Secretary/ Treasurer, Roger Garretson, Oak Park, California; Directors, Peter Crombie, Oak Lawn, Illinois, Barbara Lantow, California, Jack Ruddell, Mississauga, Ontario,
SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES

CANADA, Margaret Chamberlain, 2701 Arbutus Rd, Victoria, BC V8N1W8.

UNITED KINGDOM, Terry Mendoza, P.O. Box 2009, Rochford, Essex SS4 1BF England

The other day, I'm having lunch with a friend who's working on a movie he's shot in S-VHS for the export market. At this moment he's down in the dumps because the distributor has indicated that a movie shot in S-VHS is not acceptable. My friend has invested a large sum of money into this project with little hope of return. It's still unclear why my friend thought the distributor originally would accept a movie shot on S-VHS and now will not.

S-VHS is a great format, for certain applications. As a teacher, I insist that my beginning production students use a Panasonic AG-456 S-VHS camera. It is a relatively inexpensive camera. I can buy three S-VHS cameras for the price of one digital camera. Also, students are notoriously hard on the equipment. So I will cry less



when a S-VHS is ruined than when a digital camera is broken.

I believe that S-VHS is a great

format for most low/no budget producers and amateurs. For the price you do get higher quality than VHS. Also, a lot of computer equipment now comes with S-VHS connectors.

However, S-VHS is not always looked favorably upon by festivals and "professionals." Look at several different festival entry forms. My guess is most do not have a S-VHS selection in the format section. Many television stations will not air work shot on S-VHS.

So remember when you shoot using the S-VHS format, it may shut you out of certain venues. As for my friend, he continues to seek out distributors and perhaps he will say nothing about the production format.

I am fascinated by the web sites devoted to showing short movies. Such sites include ifilm, atom film and Short TV. Be sure to read the article regarding Short TV in this issue.

The internet serves as sort of a "great equalizer" by providing a venue for short movies. Granted not all of the movies shown are quality or perhaps would be considered appropriate for audiences of any age. But the point is, there are now more places to get our work seen!

With many viewing sites in place, the big challenge will be how to attract people to them to watch the films. No one will watch if they don't know you're out there.

Matt Jenkins

The Accompanying Letter

No 8 – September 1992

George Cushman

Competitions often receive films or videos accompanied by a lengthy, detailed written description of the picture. It may tell how the picture was made or why it was made, but more often it is to explain the picture, what it is about, where it was shot and when, what the story says, what the characters represent, and numerous other details.

One wonders why this is sent.

Is it supposed to be read to the judges? If so, before or after they have seen the picture?

Or if the picture is screened at a festival, is the letter to be read to the audience?

The answer is obviously no, for the extremely fundamental reason that any motion picture is supposed to tell its own story. If it is so poorly made that it has to be explained through a written letter, then the picture surely must not be worth watching.

Reading such a letter to the judges can sometimes give the picture an unfair advantage over other contestants.

In the case of a drama from a foreign country whose sound track is in a language other than that of the host Festival, then a translation of the dialog may be in order. This is questionable because the intonation of the

translator speaking the dialogue may carry impetus and forcefulness that the sound track does not have. This becomes a difficult question. Each instance has to be studied individually.

Often a letter will explain the difficult circumstances under which the picture was made. Again, should the judges be allowed to know this? Judges are supposed to judge on what they see, and not be concerned nor influenced on how it got there. And the Festival audience, should it be read to them? Isn't this unfair to other contestants?



Then there is the instance of the entrant who insists on giving his narration live as the picture is projected. Before the days of tape recorders, sound on film and sound stripe, this was allowed but it is not common today except for professional lecturers making live appearances.

The objection with live narration during projection for the judges is that delivery may be flawless, but when the picture is to be shown at the festival, the narrator has a cold, is sick, or for some reason cannot attend. Someone unfamiliar with the narration stumbles over the words and the presentation becomes a disaster.

To be fair to all contestants, the

video, or film, should be completely self contained, tell its whole story from the screen, and not be allowed any outside advantages, if they are advantages, as mentioned here. Only the literal translation of a foreign tongue should be considered, and that should be decided upon by the Festival Committee when drawing up the rules of the competition.

Welcome!

Brenda Lantow, well known by many AMPS members, has volunteered to serve on the Board of Directors of AMPS. We certainly welcome Brenda and will look forward to her contributions to our organization. Brenda and her husband have recently moved to Northern California and are busy building the house of their dreams.

Congratulations!

Dave Cockley's musical production called "Aliens in the Attic" has been awarded the Silver Seal in the 2000 International Film and Video Competition, sponsored by the Film and Video Institute located in England. The Silver Seal is the equivalent to second place. You can see this wonderful piece in the AMPS winner's reel, as it was a winner in last year's American International Film and Video Festival.

Matt Jenkins' documentary, "The Passing of Time" placed third in the Broadcast Education Association's 2000 juried faculty competition. There were a total of 80 entries from production faculty in this competition.

AMPS will publish festival wins for any member in good standing. Send the information to Roger Garretson.

Ask the Doc:

Dear Doc:

When editing, I notice that sometimes it is hard to understand what my actors are saying. What can I do to fix this?

Hard of Hearing, California

Dear Hard of Hearing:

Recording excellent sounding dialogue is critical because it is the hardest type of audio to reproduce in postproduction. A doorbell ringing, a car starting, other sound effects or music can easily be reproduced or added in the editing stage.



You do not indicate how you are recording the dialogue but I suspect you are using the built-in microphone on the camera. This mic is ok to capture "natural sound" but it usually does not choose one source of audio over another. For example, separating an actor's voice over an approaching car. Plus, being connected to the camera, the mic will pick up camera operating noises and even the sound of your hands touching the camera.

Look to see if your camera has

an external mic input. If it does, purchase a shotgun mic and cable so you can separate the mic from the camera. Place the mic, aimed at the subject, just out of frame. Put it on a mic stand. If the mic holder is too large, use rubber bands to keep the mic in place-NOT TAPE! If you don't have a mic stand, attach the mic to a rung on a stepladder or even attach it to a broom handle that someone can hold out of frame. Moving the mic away from the camera and closer to your subject will increase your chances of capturing quality sound.

Also consider purchasing a pair of headphones with the large earmuffs. Usually Radio Shack has a few cheaply priced models. The large muffs will cancel out extraneous noise while you play back your recording. Be sure to check your audio before leaving the field.

Finally, have your talent speak up. People not used to working in front of a camera will often speak softly. Perform an audio check prior to doing the actual taping.

What if you do all this and still have poor audio? Hopefully you will have shot some cutaway footage, perhaps another actor's reaction to what is being said. Re-cut the audio portion of what was recorded poorly and use the cutaway so the audience hears what is being said but sees the other actor's reaction to it. Mixed with music or natural sound and hopefully the change in audio quality won't be too noticeable.

Visit AMPS online at:
www.cameron.edu/~mattj/page8.html

Please consider this to be a sample page. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

Gordon Campbell passes

AMPS and the amateur movie world suffered the loss of one of our prime supporters on April 25th.

Gordon Campbell, known to many due to his involvement with the Ten Best of the West festival, was active in AMPS, his local video club, LA8, and was also president of the So. Calif. Ass'n of Amateur Movie Clubs (SCAAMC). Active up to the last, Gordon had just completed judging their last contest prior to his passing away from a heart attack.

Gordon started out in 8mm, then 16mm and when video arrived, became an avid supporter of that method of telling a story.

He will be missed by his many friends in the movie world.

What's Playing... on the Internet?

Matt Jenkins

It's a new world for short moviemakers. Perhaps you have read of the web sites where you can click and watch independently produced short movies, movies that can't be seen anywhere else. One such site is called Short TV. However, Short TV is more than just a web site, it's also a cable channel reaching Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, San Francisco and Detroit with a possible viewing audience of two million.

The web site's address is www.shorttv.com. In order to watch the movies you will need something called Flash Player which is free and easy to download.

By their own definition, Short TV and Short TV.com ... "are a truly independent short film channel and internet company dedicated to supporting independent film makers by providing them the opportunity to show their work before a wide audience."

What makes Short TV stand out from other internet movie sites is the possibility of receiving both cable and internet exposure for your production. Even if your movie isn't chosen for the cable channel, Short TV

will still list it on its web site. The site also encourages discussion between filmmakers through the "community section" bulletin board. The web site also has a "for sale" section, a talent listing, and even a gossip section.

In a discussion with Roland Dib, President of Short TV, he indicated that Short TV actively promotes the short movies and provides the filmmaker notification when the movie airs. Short TV also pays to show your movie. Short TV has an entry form which can be found on the web



site.

So, looking for a venue to show your latest epic? Check out Short TV!

Movies on a Shoe String, A Review

Matt Jenkins

As I prefaced last month's

Slamdance review, I begin this one with... Having been rejected probably three times from this festival, will it influence my review? Hmm...

Actually Movies on a Shoe-string is the group that sponsors the Rochester International Film Festival. Their web site indicates that a group of Rochester, New York area enthusiasts founded Movies on a Shoe String in 1959 when they realized that independent filmmakers needed an audience for their cinematic creations.

They consider themselves to be among the world's leading amateur festivals, hmm...

According to the web site, selected films from each year's festival are placed together in a traveling show that is loaned to organizations around New York State.

Apparently members of Movies on a Shoe String or MOAS have a "panel of judges" which pre-screens the entries. However, I can find little in regards to MOAS members or this mysterious group of judges.

When you are rejected, they do send you a form rejection letter - nice logo- that indicates the festival dates and where the festival is to be held. Also, the rejection letter contains an invitation to attend the festival, which is held at the "world famous" George Eastman International Museum of Photography.

This year's rejection came limping home with critiques from the judges. These com-

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 1)

- A. Beanbag
- B. Window mount
- C. Shoulder/chest mount
- D. Steadyng the body
- 5. Other accessories**
 - A. Second camera
 - i. Match camera type if possible, i.e., 1 chip vs 3 chip/digital vs. analog
 - ii. Useful as back up camera or multiple camera shoots or for field editing
 - B. Microphone
 - i. Shotgun
 - ii. Lavalier or wireless remote mike
 - C. conversion lenses
 - i. Wide angle lens: interiors, groups of people
 - ii. Telephoto lens: wildlife
 - iii. Diappter close up lenses: 1-5 used in combination, strongest closest to front of camera
 - D. Polarizer: shooting through water, reducing glare, making clouds pop out
 - E. Neutral density
 - F. Protection
 - i. UV filter to protect front of lens
 - ii. Plastic bag, sport housing, underwater housing
 - iii. Drying cloth
 - G. batteries
 - i. Types: Lithium ion, ni-cad, lead acid
 - ii. Chargers, including 12 volt
 - iii. Solar panel
 - iv. Converter for 240->110 if necessary
 - v. Plug adapters for foreign countries
 - H. Headphones: earbud or bigger
 - I. Portable VCR for field edit-

- ing: GV-D900 or similar
- J. Connecting power cords & miscellaneous plugs
- K. Lights
- L. Vest

Before you Go

1. Group travel

- A. Travel with like-minded people on a specifically designed trip: photographers, birders, historians, etc.
- B. Avoid itineraries with too many stops.

2. Independent travel

- A. Research locations.
- B. Seek out local experts.

What is a Travelogue?

The travelogue is essentially a documentary that shows an



event or a place in detail.

- 1. Beginning-to-end account calls for planning ahead and always being alert to transitions that will connect the various segments of the trip: shots of road signs, maps, brochures, luggage tags, planes landing and taking off, etc.
- 2. Single-subject movie concentrates on a specific event or situation: i.e., "a day on safari," "the cathedrals of Paris," etc.
- 3. A travelogue can be told

using consecutive or parallel actions.

What is a Nature Documentary?

A nature documentary focuses on living creatures and/or their behavior.

Shooting the program

- 1. Do research. The more you know about your subject, the easier it is to film appropriately: history of place, behavior of animals, etc.
- 2. Be ready. Have batteries fully charged, tape in place, extra tapes and batteries handy.
- 3. Shoot, shoot, shoot. Unless you've scripted the video beforehand, you don't know in advance what will ultimately be used, so more is better
- 4. Shooting local people
 - A. Above all, be considerate. Ask before shooting.
 - B. Be prepared to pay if it is customary.
 - C. Shoot from a distance, cover tally light.
- 5. Shooting wildlife: do nothing that will harm the animals.
- 6. Tape ambient sound that can be used in postproduction. Thirty seconds enough.
- 7. Always be on the look out for good opening and closing shots for titles and credits.
- 8. Have an open mind about final video as to take advantage of things that happen spontaneously.

(Editor's note: More of this great outline will appear in a future issue.)

(Continued from page 5)
 ments were interesting to read. My critique mainly dealt with content. The consensus was that my piece was "technically fairly well done." It is an interesting read,

Entry requirements state that the festival is open to all videos/film but they must be under 40 minutes in length. And MOAS discourages entries over 30 min-

utes in length. You are allowed only two entries. You may receive further entry information at www.rochesterfest.org.

The entry fee for early entries is \$20 and for late entries is \$40. While no cash prizes are given, winners do receive a "coveted" trophy. The winners' work is shown at the premiere.

So will I enter the Rochester

Festival again? If I am looking for exposure, then no. Do I need a festival win? Considering my track record with MOAS, then still maybe no. Am I a low/no budget producer or consider myself an amateur? Then mostly likely yes.

I guess what bothers me is I know so little about MOAS and the judges.

Upcoming Festivals

Close Date	Festival Name & Address for forms	Open to:	Subject	Formats	Time Limit	Entry Fee	Award	Show Dates
5/30	13th Int'l Kurzfilmfestival CINE ART Festival Office, Holger A. Becker, Sprützkamp 20A, D-22547 Hamburg Germany	ABC	G	HJ 35mm	30 Min	\$15		
6/15	1st Annual Wonders of the Wild Film/Video Festival, % Kevin Harrison, 64 %Tern, Campbell River BC V9W 6C6		Wild life					10/2-7 Campbell River B.C.
6/15	Canadian Int'l Annual Film/Video Festival % Ben Andrews, 25 Eugenia St, Barrie, ON L4M 1P6 Canada	ABC DE	G	HJKM	30 MIN K	\$20 & varies	UV	10/2-7 Campbell River B.C.
7/1	2000 Columbus Int'l Film and Video Festival, 5701 N. High St, ste 200, Worthington, OH 43085	ABC DE	G	G		\$75 and varies	UV	10/25-27 Columbus, OH
7/14	23rd Denver Int'l Film Festival 1430 larimer Sq, Ste 201 Denver CO 80202	ABC DE	G	M 35mm J	NONE	\$30 \$20 for student	TUV	10/12/21 Denver
7/29	45th Annual PSA Int'l Competition, %Robert Gestel, 4408 Green Valley, MO 63010-3407	ABC	G	M	20 MIN	\$7 \$12 with return	WV	10/4-9 Albuquerque New Mexico
8/15	SAVAC Int'l Amateur Motion Picture Festival % Bob Makara, 264 Hamilton Ct Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236 USA	ABC D	G	HJMNO P	20 MIN	\$10 member \$20 non member	V	10/12/15 San Jose CA
8/31	American Int'l Film & Video Festival % AMPS, 30 Kanan Rd., Oak Park, CA 91377-1105 USA	ABC	G	HJMNO PZ	30 MIN	\$10 1st tape \$8 for 2nd tape	TUV W	To be announced

N/A Not Announced or Not Available

ALL FORMATS ARE NTSC UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

A Non Commercial	D Independent	G Open	K Other L 3/4" M S8 J 16mm	N SVHS O 8mm P Hi8 Z MiniDV	Q Invitatatl R Regional S Exceptions	T U V Cash Trophies Certificate	W X Y Other Award Approximate It Varies
B College Student	E Commercial						

**ORDER THE
WINNER'S
REEL**

Order your own copy of the winners reel from last year's AMPS Festival.

Besides enjoying the excellent productions, it will make a great program for a video club.

Its only \$8 including shipping.
Make your check or money order
out to AMPS and send it to:

**Winner's Reel
Care of AMPS, 30 Kanan
Road, Oak Park, Califor-
nia 91377-1105.**

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP
AMERICAN MOTION PICTURE SOCIETY**

I Would like to Join the Society:

Dues USA: (includes - Movie Maker) \$ 7.00

Dues Canada: (includes. - Movie Maker) \$ 9.00

Dues-Foreign: (includes - Movie Maker) \$10.00

Enclosed _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS : _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

Mail to: AMPS, 30 Kanan Rd., Oak Park, CA 91377-1105

From:
American Motion Picture Society
30 Kanan Road
Oak Park, California
91377-1105



Dr. Matt Jenkins Exp6/1/00
Cameron Univ/Comm. Dept.
2800 West Gore St
Lawton, OK 73505